

proven track record of reliability and are cost effective for patients.

Dentists have come to rely on the use of Amalgam as a harmless, dependable, and cost effective material with which to treat their patients and I believe the use of Amalgam should remain a viable option for dentists and their patients.

FACTS ON THE 2002 ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANTS

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 20, 2002

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, USFA has just recently completed its peer review of the applications for this year.

Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety: \$882,539,097 representing 58 percent of the applications.

Fire Fighting Vehicles: \$1.26 billion representing 37 percent of the applications.

Emergency Medical Services: \$35,174,783 representing two percent of the applications.

Fire Prevention Programs: \$30,580,741 representing three percent of the applications.

Volunteer/Combination fire departments: 17,786 applications requesting more than \$1.9 billion.

Career fire departments: 1,733 applications requesting more than \$287 million.

This large number of requests by departments demonstrates just how significantly many fire departments are lacking the most basic of firefighting equipment.

Last year, only 4% of applicants received awards—through a peer reviewed process, which is the fairest, most effective way to distribute these funds.

Two years ago, Congress passed legislation authorizing a grant program to help fire departments enhance their ability to respond to fire and fire-related hazards. The program, known as the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, makes competitive, peer-reviewed awards to fire departments for basic needs such as training and equipment. In only its second year, the program has been extremely popular among the firefighting community and was appropriated at \$360 million for fiscal year 2002.

We invite you to co-sponsor H.R. 4548, which would protect the Assistance to Firefighters Grants as a program separate and distinct from the Administration's newly created initiative within FEMA aimed at helping emergency service personnel prepare for and respond to terrorist incidents. The fire service community has overwhelmingly opposed any consolidation of these two programs, concerned that it would negatively impact the grant program or possibly even eliminate it altogether. These programs, while both very important to first responders, serve distinct needs.

The efficient and cost effectiveness of the Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program has been of great benefit to America's fire service. Congressmen HOYER, WELDON of PA, and I ask your support as a cosponsor of this legislation that retains the current provisions of the program (authorized at \$900 million), as administered by the U.S. Fire Administration. To sign on as a cosponsor, contact me or Dan Byers at 225-5064.

MARKING INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE DAY

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 20, 2002

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, while Western nations mark and celebrate International Refugee Day today, the 3.3 million people who make up Africa's refugee population probably do not know that this day is for them. They are too busy eking out a living, a bare existence, in refugee camps and villages where they have found temporary safety.

Despite being the world leader in refugee resettlement, the U.S. has barely opened the door to African refugees. Helping Africans resettle here has not been a priority of U.S. policy since the end of the slave trade. In 1988, the Reagan Administration capped African admissions at just 3000, and fewer than 1600 Africans were actually admitted that year. From 1995 to 2000, 28% of the world's refugees were African, but only 11% of all the refugees resettled to the U.S. were Africans.

One policy of refugee resettlement was being applied to the world, while another policy with fewer admissions was being applied to Africa. I and my fellow members of the Congressional Black Caucus pressured the Clinton Administration to increase the admissions allocation for Africa, to rectify this imbalance, and to address the dire needs of people fleeing political persecution and violence in Africa.

By the end of the Clinton Administration in 2000, African admissions had climbed to 20,000 per year, largely due to the CBC's efforts. Our doors were opened to admit 22,000 African refugees this year. Despite this important victory—we are unlikely to see the fruits of our labor. Nowhere near 22,000 refugees will arrive from Africa this year, due to policy changes in the refugee program implemented after the September 11th attacks.

African admissions are down for several reasons. The Bush Administration imposed additional security checks—known as Special Advisory Opinions—on all men between the ages of 15 and 55 from certain Arab and Muslim countries, including some North and East African nations. They will not publicize this list so it is impossible to tell whether any male African refugees are exempt from this review, but processing has been very slow.

INS personnel stopped conducting circuit rides through Africa to conduct interviews of refugee applicants due to security concerns. Interviews were also stopped at processing locations in Kenya and Ghana for almost 6 months for security reasons.

The INS is also cracking down on "major inconsistencies" in the petitions of relatives seeking to join asylees already resettled in the U.S. In the worse cases, these differences include applications for parents who the resettled refugee originally claimed were murdered for political reasons, and applications for children who the refugee did not identify when they first applied for their refugee status. The rates of these inconsistencies are undeniably troubling. For some nationalities, more than 50% of family relative applications are inconsistent with the original applications filed by the resettled asylee.

Yet American and international voluntary organizations that assist in identifying refugees

for resettlement tell us that in some places refugees are bribed by middlemen who hold up their paperwork if they indicate that they have living relatives who can assist them. The fact that the vast majority of African applicants seek entry as relatives suggests that other categories of entry may not be effective ways of entry for Africans. A myriad of processing and filing errors, or fraud on the part of the anchor relative or a third party, may be to blame. Rather than seeking explanations and contacting the applicants, the INS assumes that one such inconsistency means that any other claims of persecution, no matter how brutal, are untrustworthy lies.

For all of these reasons, many of the most vulnerable populations children, amputees, widowed women, and those who languish in refugee camps—are not getting admission to a program that exists to protect them.

I remain deeply concerned that huge refugee camps still exist in Africa where thousands of people await a chance at a decent life for as many as 10 to 15 years. In that time children are raising themselves, and each other, to adulthood while living in the camps. Eighty percent of refugees in these camps are women and children—both vulnerable groups who are in need of protection and durable solutions. Families are under dire strain, reunification is difficult and resuming a normal productive life is impossible. The United States must do more to address these tragedies that are plaguing refugees in Africa.

It is also time for us to turn around the horribly unjust policy that the INS recently instituted to keep Haitian asylum seekers locked up like, and sometimes with, violent criminals. For years, the INS Miami office has paroled asylum seekers into the community, once they show credible fear of persecution, while they await the adjudication of their claims. That policy still applies to people from any nation in the world—except Haiti. The INS has decided to discriminate against Haitians, holding them for months without access to translators and lawyers, while they await a decision.

The INS has said that the purpose of this policy is to deter Haitians from risking their lives to flee Haiti by boat. If that were the case, the policy would have been applied to Cubans, and any other people that come to the U.S. by boat, at the time it was instituted. And what evidence exists to show that locking people up will keep those risking their lives and fleeing persecution from coming? The real goal appears to be to keep Haitians out of the United States and once again I must question whether race is a factor in this discriminatory policy.

About 250 refugees are now being held in Miami. Men are separated and put in the grossly overcrowded facilities at Krome Detention Center. Women are placed in a maximum security county jail with violent criminals. And children are being detained with one parent in a facility where they receive no education, no play time or trips outside, no special programs geared towards their needs.

It is bad enough that there are millions of refugees around the world who come to us for refuge from persecution. It is even worse that we are then persecuting some of these refugees when they arrive by placing them in these inhumane conditions. There is no political, strategic, security or moral justification for this policy. I call on the Attorney General to immediately parole Haitians—just like all other asylum seekers.